ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

652 Albania's national budget for the year 1936-37 is as follows:

Income	18,584,042	gold Francs
Expense	18,879,427	gold Francs
Deficit	295,385	gold Francs

Albania has contracted two loans, namely: A loan of 50,000,000 gold Francs, redeemable 653 in forty years. This loan was made by the Society for the Economic Development of Albania (SVEA), in 1927, to be used exclusively for the purpose of developing the projects of public works, such as constructing bridges, building roads, the improvement of the port of Durazzo (Durrës) and for furthering agricultural development. As security for this loan the incomes on salt, matches, cigarette paper and playing cards were pledged.

648 The second loan of 100,000,000 gold Francs 652 was agreed upon in 1931 by the Italian Government, the whole sum of which was to be liquidated by annual installments of not over 10,000,000 gold Francs, to be used to balance the budget as long as the investments, presently in course, will have beneficially assisted in giving economic stability to the nation, so that the necessary expenses may be taken care of by Albania's own resources, and a part of

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or compounded and, above all, what sides the clan should take in the strife of political factions. Tsen Lezi had long been a supporter of Abas Kupi and he received us well.

It was already May, but in the mountains we had still lived amid the gales and snow of winter. Next morning, however, as we descended from Tsen Lezi's house, we came out of the mists into the sunlight and saw the broad Mati valley spread out below us like a promised land. Fat sheep and cattle grazed in the undulating pastures; whitewashed houses, the tallest in Albania, were scattered over the low, wooded hills; and beyond the sparkling river the ground rose steeply to the wild glens of Mirdita. The guerillas had not left the mountains since autumn; and now, at the sight of the sunlit valley, the long line of men winding down the hillside broke into a strident song. Presently Abas Kupi called a halt and we sat down to refresh our eyes with the view. Hitherto I had always looked on mountains as holiday grounds; but the guerillas' song touched some atavistic chord in me and for the first time I experienced the weary highlander's longing for the plain.

Mati was rich and populated, the region where the tribal system of the mountains mingled with the feudalism of the coastal plain. The land and flocks were still owned and worked in common by the different clans; but their chiefs were already known as *Beys*; and the wealthier among them employed hired labour and rented out some of their fields to poorer families. The men of Mati were reputed devout Moslems and, as is often the way of the pious, they lived well; renowned for their lavish hospitality and comfortably appointed houses. They had prospered especially under the monarchy; for King Zog was a man of Mati and his first care had been for the people of his valley. Many, though they could not read nor write, had been given appointments in the civil service; and, following the tradition of the Turks, Zog had conferred reserve commissions on most of the *Beys*. This was not indeed to compel them to military service, but to bind them more closely to his cause by the payment of an honourable and regular pension. The valley had benefited, moreover, from an ambitious programme of public works; a road and

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[653] several bridges had been built; and Burrel had been made the model provincial capital of Albania. The grateful memory 643 of these past benefits and a just pride in their king's achievements in a broader field were fortified by the lapse in the payment of pensions which had followed his expulsion. The men of Mati were thus staunch for King Zog; we found his picture in almost every house we visited, and at night, sitting round the fire, listened to tales of his adventures and even epic poems celebrating his exploits. There were of course exceptions, as I learned one night when I asked a veteran chieftain why he had embraced the Zogist cause. The cunning old warrior eyed me closely and answered with a wealth of meaning: "I am a monarchist in case the King should come back."

*669 Our progress through the valley was leisurely and public, and indeed was intended by Abas Kupi as a demonstration to show the Zogist flag and to parade the new British Mission — the outward and visible sign of Allied support. We had brought horses with us, but the marches were short, and Abas Kupi always went on foot with his men. As a mark of respect, therefore, we left our bodyguards to lead our beasts and followed his example. We marched escorted by a bodyguard of a hundred picked guerillas, a force sufficient both to overawe any local opposition and to prevent the Germans from attacking us with anything less than a battalion. Of this indeed there was little risk; for the bridges over the Mati had been blown in the rising against the Italians, and an enemy would have had to leave his transports at the entrance to the valley. We should thus have had ample warning of his approach and would have ambushed him, or dispersed into the hills. The Germans, however, wisely preferred to let sleeping dogs lie. They knew that Abas Kupi's relations with the Partisans were strained, and, despite the presence of British officers in his camp, had no intention of diverting him from his domestic conflicts by an ill-timed and provocative attack.

000 We passed through rolling fields and leafy forests; and each day brought us to some new village where we were feasted by the clans. Their houses varied in size nd archi-